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Security Council

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Letter dated 6 May 2015 from the Permanent Representative of the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland to the United Nations addressed to the President of the Security Council

I have the honour to transmit to you a letter dated 5 May 2015 from the Representative of the Syrian National Coalition (see annex).

I would be grateful if you could have the present letter and its annex circulated as a document of the Security Council.

(*Signed*) Matthew **Rycroft**

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Annex to the letter dated 6 May 2015 from the Permanent Representative of the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland to the United Nations addressed to the President of the Security Council

It is with great concern that I draw your attention to an alarming proliferation of chlorine gas attacks perpetrated by Syrian regime forces in Idlib and Hama governorates, and the urgent need for Security Council action to prevent further atrocities, including through the imposition of measures under Chapter VII of the Charter of the United Nations, as decided by the Council in its resolutions 2118 (2013) and 2209 (2015).

In the past two weeks alone, witnesses and medics on the ground in Idlib and Hama governorates reported at least nine separate instances of toxic chemical attacks — several of them deadly. As described in the enclosure to the present annex, in each instance, barrel bombs loaded with poisonous chemical substances were deployed from Syrian regime helicopters. More than 150 civilians sustained injuries as a result of these attacks and suffered symptoms ranging from suffocation to laboured breathing. At least two children died as a result of the attacks, both of whom were under the age of three.

It is highly likely that the chemical agent responsible for causing such suffering was once again chlorine gas. Lethal when deployed for military purposes, chlorine's use as a chemical weapon constitutes a war crime as defined by the Protocol for the Prohibition of the Use in War of Asphyxiating, Poisonous or Other Gases, and of Bacteriological Methods of Warfare, signed in Geneva on 17 June 1925, and to which Syria acceded on 22 November 1968. It also represents a direct violation of Security Council resolutions 2118 (2013) and 2209 (2015).

Since the adoption of Security Council resolution 2118 (2013) in September 2013, the will of the Council has been repeatedly, systematically and wilfully violated. More than 92 separate incidents of chemical weapons use have been recorded since the adoption of resolution 2118 (2013), including more than 25 separate incidents since the adoption of resolution 2209 (2015), just two months ago. But this past week's atrocities represent the most prolific use of chemical weapons by Syrian regime forces to date. Syrian civil defence teams are struggling to keep pace with the growing increase in chemical weapons use by Syrian regime forces — and Syrian civilians are dying as a result.

The failure to enforce Security Council resolutions 2118 (2013) and 2209 (2015) represents a permanent stain on the international community, and the Council in particular. The failure to enforce the will of the Council has allowed impunity to reign. It has cost lives in Syria and it has prolonged the crisis, fuelling the rise of terrorist extremist groups like ISIL and imperiling regional and now global security.

Existing resolutions on Syria can and must be enforced, including through the adoption of measures under Chapter VII of the Charter, as mandated by the Security Council in its resolutions 2118 (2013) and 2209 (2015). Without such enforcement, more civilians will die, and this conflict will continue to threaten international peace and security.

On behalf of the people of Syria and the National Coalition of Syrian Revolutionary and Opposition Forces, I am therefore calling upon the Security Council to work without delay to:

(a) **Stop the systematic use of chlorine gas through the implementation of a safe zone enforced by a no-fly zone.** A no-fly zone would put an immediate end to Assad's deployment of chemical gas by air. It would save lives, alleviate suffering and begin to lay the foundation towards a political solution;

(b) **Name and shame those responsible for the chlorine gas attacks.** To date, the Fact-Finding Mission of the Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons has not been mandated to determine responsibility for the use of chlorine gas. The reason for this is clear: one member of the Security Council wishes to ensure a lack of accountability. This must change. Anyone and everyone responsible for the use of chemical weapons must be identified and held accountable in a court of law;

(c) **Pursue justice through all legal means.** A lack of consensus among Security Council members continues to prevent the Council from authorizing the foremost instrument capable of delivering justice to victims: an International Criminal Court referral. If the Security Council is incapable of referring the situation in Syria to the International Criminal Court because of the irresponsible use of the veto, concerned Member States should establish an alternative mechanism, such as an ad hoc tribunal.

The priority of the Syrian National Coalition is to save the lives of our people. There is no reason that one more Syrian should be gassed to death by a brutal dictator intent on exploiting his monopoly of air power to barrel bomb his own people into submission. To stop the barrel bombs in Syria, the Security Council must deny the regime's ability to kill by air. A no-fly zone is the best way to do so. Should the Security Council fail to reach the consensus needed to authorize a safe zone, then I urge Member States to act on their own legal and moral authority to save lives in Syria and take the steps necessary to provide protection to our people.

Enclosure

Reported cases of chemical weapons attacks in Idlib and Hama, Syria

16 April-3 May 2015

16 April 2015	Two barrel bombs were deployed in Idlib city's Al Dbeyt area, resulting in seven victims, among them four children.
26 April 2015	Barrel bombs carrying chlorine gas were deployed in the Hwash village of the Hama countryside at approximately 10 p.m. Twenty-six civilians sustained injuries, including a two-year-old.
28 April 2015	Barrel bombs loaded with toxic chemical gas fell on Karsa'a, a village in the countryside of Idlib. Ten cases of suffocation were reported in Karsa'a, and three in Korin.
29 April 2015	Two bombs carrying chlorine gas were deployed in the western countryside of Hama.
29 April 2015	Two barrel bombs containing deadly chlorine gas hit a medical clinic in Sarqb, a suburb of Idlib, at 3 a.m. local time. The 12 victims present at the site — including 2 children — suffered symptoms including suffocation and required immediate medical attention.
1 May 2015	Five barrel bombs equipped with chlorine gas were dropped by regime helicopters on Qulaydin village in Ghab plain, Idlib.
1 May 2015	Barrel bombs containing toxic chemical gas were launched in Sarqb, Idlib. More than 70 civilians suffered injuries and suffocation, including two-year-old Mutee Jalal who suffocated to death.
2 May 2015	Two barrel bombs filled with chlorine gas were dropped on the villages of Sarqb and Nairab, Idlib. At least 40 civilians, including children, suffered respiratory problems following the attacks, including baby Mustafa Haj Ali who died of suffocation.
3 May 2015	Barrel bombs containing chemical gases were dropped on Eblien and in Jabalpur Zawiyeh, Idlib.